

## Compte rendu

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*Taking the Air: Ideas and Change in Canada's National Parks*. By Paul Kopas. (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2008. 248 p., notes, bibl., index. ISBN 9780774813303 pb. \$32.95 9780774813297 hc. \$85)

par John Sandlos

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strengths and weaknesses are there in the data? When is local and/or oral knowledge treated as scientific data and when as sentiment? When there are debates over differing results and the consequences for wildlife management, why does one side win and not the other? Finally, why does sentiment have such influence and why is science not more persuasive? The study of the development and implementation of game regulation and wildlife management generally provides an excellent opportunity for the conceptualization, practice, dissemination and application of science to ecological management especially at present. As societies currently confront enormous environmental challenges with heated debates about science and sentiment, a more articulated account of how debates unfolded in the past would be helpful in illuminating the progress of the present conflicts.

In the context of current environmental debates, these books make a valuable contribution by showing that the state can act in self-contradictory ways, that what constitutes knowledge is often unclear, that the application of science is contested and inconsistent, and that power and resistance are present in acts of regulation. While the stories told in both books are valuable and the detail arresting, both could do more to show what broader debates they engage and why these observations are important. With respect both to the conduct of the state and the particular (mis)application of science, a more ambitious attempt to explain social, political, economic and ideational forces behind these outcomes would go a greater distance to uncovering the Canadian relationship with the environment.

PAUL KOPAS

***Taking the Air: Ideas and Change in Canada's National Parks.* By Paul Kopas.** (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2008. 248 p., notes, bibl., index. ISBN 9780774813303 pb. \$32.95 9780774813297 hc. \$85)

It has been four decades since the inaugural Parks for Tomorrow conference held at the University of Calgary gave legitimacy to national parks as a subject worthy of scholarly study. Since that time, however, parks scholarship in Canada has remained somewhat fragmented, confined to individual papers in difficult to access journals or several edited collections that often repeat the same themes (with a similar cast of authors) about the importance of national parks and the need to create more of them. With some exceptions (notably Alan MacEachern's *Natural Selections*, a historical study of four national parks in Atlantic

Canada), there have been very few book length studies that attempt to place the parks within their broader historical context of changing social, political and environmental ideas.

Paul Kopas' *Taking the Air: Ideas and Change in Canada's National Parks* represents a brave attempt to fill this relative void in parks scholarship. An assessment of evolving parks policies from their beginnings in 1885 to the present time (albeit with a heavy emphasis on the period after World War II), Kopas' book adopts the premise that the post-war evolution of parks policy is grounded in what the author terms the contextualizing ideas of four distinct historical periods. The first of these was a state-led effort beginning in 1955 to revitalize process of park creation, an initiative grounded in a broader heightened faith in bureaucratic notions of rational planning. From here, we move to the 1970s when the prevailing ideas about governance encouraged grassroots public participation in park planning and management issues. By the 1980s, Kopas suggests that parks policy processes had shifted toward a more narrow partnership between the state and organized interest groups. In his final period, Kopas cites two trends that had a profound impact on parks policy in the 1990s: the retrenchment of the state as the dominant player in the parks policy field and the move toward privatization and market-driven planning principles during an era of extreme fiscal restraint in Canada.

Kopas provides ample evidence and examples to support his model of four distinct periods in national parks policy formation. In the section on the early state-driven period, for instance, the author includes a detailed discussion of the relatively closed process of bureaucratic planning that culminated in the national system plan in 1970. The chapter on the participatory period of the 1970s is similarly infused with key examples such as the public protests over the creation of Kouchibouguac National Park, the proposed construction of Village Lake Louise, Aboriginal advocacy for recognition of Treaty rights in national park planning, and the public consultations that produced the increasingly environmental focus of the National Parks Policy Statement in 1979. During the era of interest group dominance in the 1980s, Kopas focuses intensely on the role of big environmental groups in the creation of the endangered spaces campaign. He also assesses the convergence of state, environmental and Aboriginal interests that resulted in the preservation of Gwaii Haanas National Park, an ecologically and culturally significant landscape for the Haida that had been threatened by logging. Nowhere, however, is Kopas's analysis of relationship between specific policy initiatives and the contextualizing ideas that surround them stronger than in the section on the privatizing era of the 1990s. Here, Kopas deftly analyzes the

influence of the Thatcher government's civil service reforms on the radical policy shift entailed by the creation of a relatively autonomous Parks Canada Agency. More importantly, he provides an incisive critique of the move toward revenue generation as a key management goal of Parks Canada, suggesting that visitors to the parks have been reduced to consumers of services rather than citizens engaged with public space.

At times, Kopas' four periods of policy innovation proved to be an overly restrictive model of historical change. Was, for instance, the gulf between the participatory period of the 1970s and the interest group paradigm of the 1980s as wide as Kopas suggests? Obviously, environmental groups such as the Worldwide Fund for Nature (WWF) have grown so large that they form corporate entities, but there are many parks and protected areas associations or local chapters of the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society that remain 'grassroots' by any definition. These smaller groups still play a fundamental role in the protected areas policy process; whether we can neatly categorize them as interest groups or grassroots activists is a matter of some historical debate. In addition, Kopas' exclusive focus on ideas in the strictly political realm as the key contributor to the development of parks policy so does not, in my view, pay sufficient attention to the pervasive role of science in parks policy formation. Arguably, the most important contextualizing ideas contributing to the new environmental focus in parks policy over the last three decades has been cutting edge scientific disciplines such as conservation biology and landscape ecology, both of which have provided empirical means to measure the role of protected areas in stemming the global tide of biodiversity loss. Yet Kopas' definition of a contextualizing idea seems limited only to that which can be drawn primarily from the realm of state, grassroots or interest group politics.

Taken as a whole, however, Kopas' volume provides an extremely valuable and eloquently argued study of the means by which national parks policy has evolved over time. He rejects the somewhat scattershot and ahistorical approach of the policy networks/community theorists, where policy outcomes depend entirely on the specific interaction among the political, bureaucratic and non-governmental actors who are tied to a particular issue. Instead, Kopas argues that ideas do matter in policy formation, particularly expansive ideas about democracy, governance, public participation, and (in the case of parks, at least) the appropriate place of humans in the natural world. Such a well crafted contextual argument, combined with highly readable prose and thorough research, easily positions *Taking the Air* as the most important scholarly study of Canadian national parks policy in the post-World War Two era. The book is a

valuable companion to the insider's perspective of former Parks Canada staffer Rick Searle in his popular book *Phantom Parks*. Policy makers, environmentalists, and all Canadian citizens who care deeply about our national parks should study Kopas' work carefully.

JOHN SANDLOS

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***Hunting for Empire: Narratives of Sport in Rupert's Land, 1840-1870.***

**By Greg Gillespie.** (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2007. 200 p., ill., notes, bibl., index. ISBN hc. 978-0-7748-1354-9 \$85 978-0-7748-1355-6 pb. \$32.95)

Greg Gillespie begins this book with a story about himself, a young boy sitting in a small town barbershop, surrounded by magazines on hunting and fishing, displays of deer antlers, and pictures of various game animals, and the Queen. The vignette nicely captures the main thrust of *Hunting for Empire*. Gillespie analyzes the published accounts of selected mid-Victorian travellers in the lands of the Hudson's Bay Company from the perspective of those who read them. He is interested in the cultural work these texts did at home, particularly in the context of British imperialism.

Gillespie has read widely in the cultural history of empire, and puts this reading to good use. In a series of thematic chapters, he approaches the same set of narratives using different types of analytical frameworks. The narratives reveal distinct, interesting and interconnected features when Gillespie views them from literary, sporting-culture, cartographic and landscape-aesthetic perspectives. The focus is not so much on the multiple meanings of these narratives, but on the layering of these meanings as part of a general imperial vision. Gillespie tries to avoid reading the narratives as simple reflections of particular cultural and scientific ideas, and is at his best when he is attentive to the tensions and contradictions within the texts.

Overall, the analysis is heavily influenced by David Cannadine's concept of "ornamentalism." Gillespie is interested in the different ways in which the British adventurers brought their own gentlemanly scientific and sporting values to the lands they visited, and how they sought to domesticate the landscapes, animals and behaviours they observed. Readers of these narratives were more often introduced to what was familiar, rather than to what was exotic.